



Rideshare Coordinator of the Quarter Tammy Walters, Baltimore City

Tammy Walters works at the Baltimore City Department of Transportation as a Rideshare and Marketing Coordinator and is a Commuter Choice Maryland partner.

Gladys Hurwitz, with Commuter Choice Maryland, had the pleasure of interviewing Tammy about her experience working with businesses and commuters, commuter tips, what her role and program entails, and what she loves about working with Commuter Choice Maryland. To learn more about Tammy, keep reading!

Hi Tammy! Thank you for joining us today and being a part of our new interview series to be featured in our quarterly newsletters. So, let's get right to it! You do a lot for your department, with your dual role of Rideshare and Marketing Coordinator, in addition to your new role as a TDM Specialist. Tell me about your responsibilities within these roles.

Tammy: Thank you! I wear two hats at Baltimore City. As the Rideshare Coordinator, I manage a program called iRide Baltimore. This program promotes alternative forms of transportation to city residents and city visitors. We're trying to get people out of single occupancy vehicles and promote walking, biking, taking public transit, carpooling, vanpooling, and teleworking. Teleworking is something we are starting to implement at Baltimore City, which makes me happy because we're getting on board with some of the things I promote to other agencies or employers. In my marketing role, I support our communications team with website and social media updates, marketing tabling, and outreach events.

Getting on board with teleworking is big for your department. I think it always helps when your leadership is comfortable with it, so that is great news.

Tammy: So, within our agency, I work in the Transit and Marine Bureau at Baltimore City Department of Transportation (DOT), and we are looking more into teleworking. Now, some agencies in the city apparently already telework. Our new Director came from DGS, so we presented the idea to him and he was supportive. We are trying to work on a schedule in the office because we don't want everyone having their telework day on the same day. We're trying to work on what everyone needs in terms of technology to support this effort and then trying to get to a schedule that everyone is comfortable with. So, we're in the early beginning stages.

What do you love most about your roles as a Rideshare Coordinator and a TDM Specialist?

Tammy: What I love most is when someone calls me in, what seems like distress. They started a new job and want to know how they are going to get to work and other commuting options. They want to try something different from driving alone. It gets me excited when people want to learn about alternative options. It's especially gratifying when the new option works for them! It's rewarding, getting to help someone. For example, a woman called and she didn't know that there was a MARC station at Bowie. She was pleasantly surprised to know that she could drive to the Bowie MARC station, park her car, and still get into Baltimore pretty easily. Commuting becomes easier when you don't have to sit in traffic and deal with the hustle and bustle on I-495, I-695, I-295 to get to Baltimore.

Could you provide us with a little bit more insight about the businesses that you've been working with? Are they of all business sizes? What industries are they coming from? Are they new businesses? Have they been in operations for some time now? We just want to get a snapshot of the types of businesses you have worked with.

Tammy: A lot of the businesses I have worked with are of all different sizes, but mainly I have worked with larger corporations in Baltimore City. Through word of mouth, through talking to those folks, I would say I haven't been super successful in starting anything with them. I feel like sometimes, they have a different understanding of what we do. I think they want more than we can offer, from my experience. For example, we can't open more parking spaces or we can't provide special transportation to that business. But we can provide information on transportation options.

The other thing that I found interesting, and I don't know if it's just in Baltimore, but people aren't trusting of the rideshare database that we use. From my experience, businesses want to be able to connect their employees with each other for commuter options, such as carpooling/ridesharing and vanpooling. Obviously it's a "no" because the current rideshare database isn't setup that way but it is something to keep in mind. So that's why I'm excited to work with the Baltimore Development Corporation. They work with businesses daily throughout Baltimore City and it will be good to get some possible leads. So, I'm going to start there and see. Maybe next time when you ask me, I'll have a better list of business profiles to share.

When we first started our journey to refresh the Commuter Choice Maryland program, we interviewed and surveyed businesses throughout Maryland and one of their top reasons for offering commuter benefits was "attracting and retaining talent." What have businesses shared with you as to why they offer commuter benefits to their employees?

Tammy: I think the main reason is to keep up with the times. Yes, a lot of companies have the philosophy that you don't have to be in the office to get your work done. I come

from a mentor who told me in my line of work, if you're in the office, I don't think you're doing your job. It really depends on the job. As a marketing professional I should be out talking to people and be out of the office more than I'm in the office. But I think a lot of companies must compete to keep top talent. Some of these trendsetting companies have hybrid office spaces and have a different way of doing things. They want to be more environmentally friendly. They want to set that example for their employees who want alternatives to driving alone to get to work.

What are the top three things you want businesses and/or commuters to know about your program at Baltimore City?

Tammy: Most importantly, I want people to know that our program exists. I have been in this line of work for three years now and it's quite interesting how so many people just don't know about it. Also, I want them to have a true understanding of what we can offer or what we can provide. Lastly, after we meet, I want them to have the confidence to comfortably relay our information to their organizations and start implementing commuter benefits.

I would like Baltimore City to implement some sort of laws around TDM like D.C. and Northern Virginia. Perhaps that's the push that businesses need to be on board. Not really forcing it, but showing it's serious thing. As we progress and more people move to the city, there are more hopes and wishes for me. There's going to be more traffic and issues surrounding transportation. So why not get the law makers on board? We must think forward!

What is one tip you would give to employers who are new to commuter benefits and want to get started?

Tammy: Ask as many questions as possible because there is a lot of information available. Use your resources. Whether it's your jurisdiction or coordinator. Just ask questions.

What is one tip you would give to someone who wants to form a rideshare or carpool?

Tammy: Do not be afraid of Commuter Connections' database. I get that a lot. People want to know where their information is going and how to connect with others in the database. There's a lot going on and you want to make sure you're safe. Security is important and we are here to help you get started and feel comfortable, so connect with us! And, if they don't know about Guarantee Ride Home, that's an option for you.

What do you like most about working with Commuter Choice Maryland?

Tammy: Oh, my goodness! The hot question! Commuter Choice Maryland has been so helpful in revamping the "sparks" in the work that we do for businesses and commuters. There is excitement with the endless possibilities, almost like Fourth of July with the

“sparks.” You’re not only getting the rideshare coordinators that you work with excited, but the information you are providing, the resources, are very helpful. Especially for me! I am very young in this and there are some things I didn’t know I needed to be doing. So, it’s good to have you guys as a resource. Thank you!